



Towards 2030

The land professional's role in the Global Agenda for Sustainable Development

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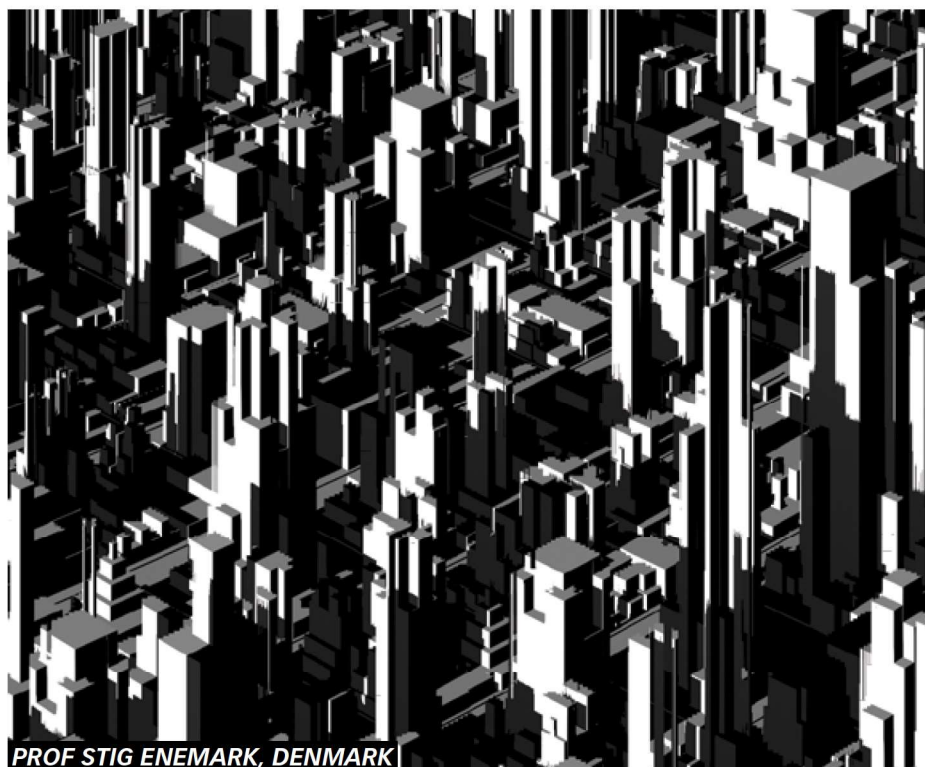


Surveying the SDGs

A land professional's role in sustainability

Towards 2030

The land professional's role in the Global Agenda for Sustainable Development



PROF STIG ENEMARK, DENMARK

The United Nations 2030 Global Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for a “data revolution” to empower government and people with information on the progress towards meeting the targets. Sound land governance and administration is fundamental to achieving this new agenda and land professionals have a key role to play.

The Millennium Development Goals ended in 2015 and are now replaced by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with a new, universal set of 17 goals and 169 targets that UN member states are committed to use to frame their agenda and policies over the next 15 years. The goals and targets integrate economic, social and environmental aspects and recognise their interlinkages in achieving sustainable development in all its dimensions. While the MDGs did not mention land directly, the SDGs include a number of goals with a direct reference to land issues. Significantly, land governance is now placed at the very top of the global agenda.

Land governance involves the procedures, policies, processes and

institutions by which land, property and other natural resources are managed. This includes decisions on access to land, land rights, land use and land development. All countries have evolved a policy on how to deal with the management of land in their society. They have to deal with the four functions of land tenure, land value, land use and land development in some way or another. In every society, sound land governance is the key toward the achievement of sustainable development.

Land administration systems provide a country with an infrastructure for implementing land policies and land management strategies in support of sustainable development. The operational component of the land governance concept is the range of land administration functions that include the areas of: land tenure (securing and transferring rights in land and natural resources); land value (valuation and taxation of land and properties); land use (planning and control of the use of land and natural resources); and land development (implementing utilities, infrastructure, construction works, and urban and rural developments).

The SDGs

The SDGs include six goals with a significant land component mentioned in the targets. For example, in Goal 1, which calls for ending poverty in all its forms everywhere, target 4 states that by 2030 all men and women will have equal rights to ownership and control over land and other forms of property. This calls for closing the security of tenure gap that exists in most developing countries.

Similarly, the land component is referred to in target 3 of Goal 2 on ending hunger, and, more generally in Goal 5 on gender equity, Goal 11 on sustainable cities, Goal 15 on life on land, and Goal 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions. These goals and targets will never be achieved without having good land governance and well-functioning country-wide land administration systems in place.

Monitoring

There is strong request for effective monitoring and assessment of progress in achieving the SDGs. There is a need for reliable and robust data for devising appropriate policies and interventions for the achievement of the SDGs and for holding governments and the international community accountable. Such a monitoring framework is crucial for encouraging progress and enabling achievements at national, regional and global level.

Therefore, about 240 indicators are developed to enable measuring the progress of achieving the targets. This will be presented in an annual progress report from the UN. Also, the World Bank, in conjunction with UN and other partners, has developed the Land Governance Assessment Framework (LGAF) for benchmarking and monitoring the core areas, such as the legal and institutional frameworks. The wider global agenda includes a range of land related issues illustrated in Figure 2.

Land Tenure

Responsible governance of tenure is now incorporated as part of the global agenda through the Committee on World Food Security's Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure. The Guidelines place tenure rights (whether



Left: Figure 1. The Sustainable Development Goals where Goal 1,2,5,11 15 and 16 are land related.

Below: Figure 2. The Wider Global Agenda includes a range of land related issues and agendas.

"Land governance is now placed at the very top of the global agenda."

legal or legitimate) in the context of human rights. They are an international "soft law instrument" that represents a global consensus on internationally accepted principles and standards for responsible practices. Actors can then determine whether their proposed actions and the actions of others constitute acceptable practices.

The United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management is mandated, among other tasks, to provide a platform for the development of effective strategies on how to build and strengthen national capacity on geospatial information and disseminating best practices. UN-GGIM has included land administration activities into their remit of global information management. UN-GGIM is gaining influence in the geospatial domain, including geodetic frameworks and guidance to the geospatial user community.

UN-HABITAT has developed an innovative approach to addressing the land tenure issue through the Social Tenure Domain Model. This includes a "scaling up approach" with a range of steps from informal to more formalised land rights. This continuum of land rights does not mean that societies will necessarily develop into freehold tenure systems, but rather that each step in the process can be formalised, providing a stronger protection than at earlier stages. This ensures that legitimate rights, such as customary tenure, are recognised.

Human Rights

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights from 1948 is stating the universal rights of human beings based on the principle of respect for the individual. In relation to land and governance, the Declaration states "that everyone has the right to possess property (security of tenure) and the right to adequate food, clothing and housing".

The right to housing should be seen as the right to live somewhere in security, peace and dignity. Also, women's access to land needs first and foremost to be seen as a universal human right, independently of any other arguments in favour of it. Obviously human rights and land governance are closely linked. Human rights are fundamental and should be encouraged and promoted through building adequate systems of land governance and administration that are relevant and accessible for people living in poverty.

Climate and Disasters

One of the elements in achieving climate-resilient urban development and sustainable rural land use is the degree to which climate change adaptation and disaster risk management are mainstreamed into two major components of land governance, namely: securing and safeguarding of land rights; and the planning and control of land use. In this regard, responsible land governance should be underpinned by Fit-For-Purpose (FFP) land administration systems that include security of tenure rights as well as effective land-use planning and control.

Urbanisation

Urbanisation is a major change that is taking place globally. The tipping point was reached in 2007 when over half the world's population was living in urban areas and projections indicate that the urban population will reach 60% by 2030. This incredibly rapid growth of megacities causes severe ecological, economic and social problems. It is increasingly difficult to manage this growth in a sustainable way.

It is recognised that over 70% of the growth currently happens outside of the formal planning process and that 30% of urban populations in less developed countries are living in slums or informal settlements, i.e. where vacant state-owned or private land is occupied illegally and used for slum dwellings. In Sub-Sahara Africa, 90% of all new urban settlements are taking the form of slums.

Land professionals

Solutions to the overall global land issues relate to alleviation of poverty, social inclusion and stability, investments and economic development, as well as environmental protection and natural





Left: Figure 3. Lagos is one of the fastest growing cities in the world with huge slum areas expanding into the waters. Photo: Enemark, 2009.

Below: Figure 4. Example from Rwanda showing aerial imagery (left) from which the parcel boundaries are easily identified (right).

resource management. These land matters are now embedded in the SDGs and the land professionals are the custodians of the systems dealing with these land issues. The lawyers have a major role in land administration by setting the legal and regulatory frameworks and delivering land administration services in countries where the judicial system supports land registration. Land surveyors normally enjoy a monopoly on boundary determination within their countries, but in the majority of developing countries there are simply not sufficient surveyors to meet the demand.

A Fit-For-Purpose Approach

Most developing countries are struggling to find remedies for their many land problems that are causing land conflicts, reducing economic development and preventing their countries reaching their true potential. Existing investments in land administration and management solutions have been piecemeal and have not delivered the required changes and improvements at scale. The solutions have not helped the neediest; the poor and disadvantaged with no security of tenure.

In fact, the beneficiaries of this unsustainable management of land have been the rich, elite and organisations involved in land grabbing. Current solutions are not effective within developing countries and it is time to rethink the approaches. Solutions are required that can deliver security of tenure for all, can be quickly developed and are scalable.

Such a solution is offered by the recent GLTN publication on Fit-For-Purpose Land Administration – Guiding Principles for Country Implementation. This publication outlines a pragmatic and realistic FFP approach for developing countries that can provide security of tenure for all across a country within a generation based on the requirements from the Global Agenda.

This brave new thinking has evolved out of successful, innovative projects such as in Rwanda (see Figure 4). Strong political leadership and land professionals

willing to adopt serious change have underpinned these successful projects. The GLTN publication presents the concept, provides the connected key principles and a generic set of guidelines to be applied in developing a country specific FFP strategy for land administration.

Opportunities

The hearts and minds of land professionals need to be turned to fully understand and embrace the FFP approach. This will require the benefits of such a move to be clearly articulated so that any perceived threats are dissipated.

The FFP approach will create even greater demand for land professionals as security of tenure is provided for all and the need for services will increase significantly. For example, new services will be required to upgrade the evidence of land rights along the continuum of rights, to provide training and supervision of local land officers and to effectively manage and quality assure land information.

This is a great opportunity for land professionals. Organisations such as FIG and their member associations need to actively promote the adoption of the FFP approach to land administration across their membership and enable experience and best practice to be shared across the land professionals.

Concluding remarks

There is a general consensus that governing the people to land relationship is at the heart of the 2030 global agenda.



There is an urgent need to build simple and basic systems using a flexible and affordable approach to identify the way land is occupied and used by all whether these land rights are legal or locally legitimate. The systems need to be simple and flexible in terms of spatial identification, legal regulations and institutional arrangements to meet the actual needs in society today.

When considering the resources and capacities required for building such systems and the connected basic spatial framework in developing countries, the conventional western style concepts may well be seen as the end target but not as the point of entry. During the assessment of technology and investment choices, the focus should be on a “fit-for-purpose approach” that will meet the needs of society today and can be incrementally improved over time.

Building such spatial, legal, and institutional frameworks will establish the link between people and land. This will enable the management and monitoring of improvements in meeting aims and objectives of adopted land policies as well as meeting the global agenda. Land professionals have a key role to play in this regard.

Further reading

United Nations (2015): Transforming our World: The 2030 Global Agenda for Sustainable Development.
<http://bit.ly/2flSxrc>

Enemark, McLaren, Lemmen (2016): Fit-For-purpose Land Administration – Guiding Principles for Country Implementation. UN-Habitat/GLTN, Nairobi. <http://bit.ly/2flY1CM>

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